

UU Casper
Theological Questions About Time
Sunday Service
September 28, 2025

9:50 am

Jayne: Prelude music 10 minute

Gathering and Welcome

RING CHIME

Cindy: Welcome/Introductions, children [stay/to RE #413 Go Now in Peace]

Good morning! I'm Cindy Wright, and I'll be guiding our service today. Welcome to this sacred space, the Unitarian Universalist Community of Casper. Whether you are a familiar face or this is your first time with us, we are so glad you are here.

No matter our age, your size, the color of your hair or skin – you are welcome here!

Whether you walked, drove, rolled, or were carried – you are welcome!

No matter how you speak, whatever your abilities, where you live or how you make your living – you are welcome!

No matter whom you love; whether you come with joy or tears in your heart —

Welcome to all who come with an open mind, willing hands, and a loving heart!

If you are new to our community, please know that your unique presence enriches us all. We invite you to fill out a visitor card, available in the entryway, so we can connect you with information about our activities and help you find what truly nourishes your spirit here.

Cindy: Housekeeping Items

- Please check that your cell phone is muted.
- Exits
- Bathrooms
- Tea, Coffee & snacks

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Cindy: Chalice Lighting - *Sacred Unknowing* by Amy Carol Webb

We light this flame

For the art of sacred unknowing.

Humbled by all that we cannot fathom in this time,

We come into the presence of what we do know,

Perhaps the only thing we can ever know:

That Love is now and forever

The only answer to everything

And everyone

In every moment.

Cindy: Joys and Concerns

The spirit of love is with us: it comforts us and connects us. If you have a joy or a concern this morning, you are invited to come forward and light a candle and share with our community. If you prefer, you may write your joy or concern on one of the prayer cards you received with the order of service. Please place your card in the purple Altar of Hope box, which has moved to the back of the sanctuary on the bookcase. Altar of Hope cards will be burned in the next burning ceremony as a symbolic joining with universal healing energies. All offerings are private and treated with reverence and respect.

- My joy today is for yesterday's highway clean-up. We had 12 members and friends help pick up garbage from 9 am to noon, and one of our Bahai friends drove by and told us that if she didn't have to be at work she would have liked to join us. I'm very grateful for all of you.

Opening Reading: *Leading Las Posadas* by Tania Y Márquez

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/leading-las-posadas>

Jayne: *Opening Song: #350, *The Ceaseless Flow of Endless Time*

Centering and Reflection

Cindy: *Unison Covenant

Love is the spirit of this church and service its cause.

This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace,

to seek truth in love, and to help one another.

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James Vila Blake (adapted)

Cindy: Presentation

Introduction

Chronos and kairos are two ancient Greek words that both mean time. Both words frequently appear in the New Testament of the Bible. Chronos relates to a span of time regardless of whether it's generalized or specific. Chronos would make a lot of sense in the context of planning or writing a historical record. Kairos on the other hand relates to right or opportune moments, seasons, and times when someone might "feel in the moment." E.C. White defines kairos as the "long, tunnel-like aperture through which the archer's arrow has to pass", and as the moment "when the weaver must draw the yarn through a gap that momentarily opens in the warp of the cloth being woven". So chronos relates more to sequential, measurable ideas about time and kairos relates more to moments, seasons, and when the time is ripe.

One of my favorite TED Talks is called My Stroke of Insight, delivered by Jill Bolte Taylor, a Harvard-trained neuroanatomist who experienced a severe hemorrhage in the left hemisphere of her brain. Dr. Taylor describes the brain's two hemispheres as distinct processing centers: the right hemisphere experiences the present moment, big picture, and universal connection, while the left hemisphere focuses on linear logic, details, the past, and the future through language. She posits that we can consciously choose to access the "right brain" consciousness for peace and connection, or the "left brain" for detail-oriented tasks. I highly recommend looking up the TED Talk and hearing about her experience having the left hemisphere of her brain mostly offline during the stroke.

In *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, Iain McGilchrist explores the distinct roles and perspectives of the brain's two hemispheres, arguing that their differing modes of attention shape human experience, culture, and history.

The left hemisphere is narrow, focused, and analytical. It prioritizes detail, abstraction, and categorization, breaking things into parts.

The left hemisphere is:

- Logical, linear, and sequential thinking.
- Emphasizes language, abstraction, and explicit knowledge (e.g., facts, labels, and systems).
- Prefers certainty, predictability, and control.
- Views the world as static, mechanical, and decontextualized, like a machine or a map.
- Associated with manipulation, tool use, and utilitarian goals.

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It can become rigid, overly reductionist, and disconnected from context, leading to a fragmented or overly abstract view of reality.

The right hemisphere is broad, holistic, and integrative. It focuses on the "big picture," context, and interconnectedness.

The right hemisphere is:

- Intuitive, empathetic, and open to ambiguity and complexity.
- Processes nonverbal cues, emotions, and implicit knowledge (e.g., metaphor, art, and lived experience).
- Attuned to relationships, living systems, and the present moment.
- Sees the world as dynamic, organic, and interconnected, with a sense of "wholeness."
- Associated with creativity, imagination, and the ability to handle novelty.

The right hemisphere is less precise and more diffuse, it relies on the left hemisphere for detailed execution.

Is it possible that the ancient Greek word for time, *chronos*, describes how the left brain experiences time and the word *kairos* describes how the right hemisphere experiences time? The title of Iain McGilchrist's book, *The Master and His Emissary*, reflects his view of the ideal dynamic: the right hemisphere (the "master") should guide, while the left hemisphere (the "emissary") serves it. However, he warns that the emissary has usurped the master's role in our culture, leading to cultural and societal imbalances.

I find it fascinating that our brains have distinctly different functions that might relate to the different ways of thinking about time expressed by the Ancient Greeks. Two ways that religions, with their stories, prophecies, and beliefs describe time is in a linear fashion, with a beginning and an end or in a cyclical fashion with the expectation of repetition, as nature's cycles and ages come and go.

Cyclical time

One of the meanings of the word *kairos* includes seasonal events such as harvest time in fall. This meaning relates to the right thing happening at the right time and it also relates to cyclical events.

In Mark 11:23-23, we see *kairos*, "The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. 13 Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the *kairos*, or season, for figs."

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In the Hindu cosmology, time is eternal and cyclical. The Yuga Cycle lasts for over 4 million years. It's composed of four Yugas which are the ages that constitute a complete yuga cycle.

The four Yugas are:

- Satya Yuga is the first and most virtuous age, also known as the Golden Age. Humans are spiritually advanced, living in truth, honesty, and harmony with nature, leading to high standards of morality.
- Treta Yuga is the second age, or Silver Age, where humanity experiences a partial decline in spiritual life and virtue. People are still connected to spiritual knowledge but are less advanced than in Satya Yuga.
- Dvapara Yuga is the "Bronze Age," where the emergence of suffering and the beginning of spiritual decay becomes more pronounced. Technology and self-interest increase, and evil begins to appear within society.
- Kali Yuga is the final age, or Iron Age, where ignorance and materialism dominate. This is the present era and is marked by a significant decline in virtue, strife, corruption, and a disconnect from spirituality. This is the shortest age of the four.

According to a widely accepted tradition in Hinduism, we are currently in Kali Yuga, the fourth and final age of the Yuga cycle, which is characterized by decline and moral degradation. However, some traditions and interpretations, such as those of Sri Yukteswar, propose that the Yuga cycle is shorter in duration, placing the current period in Dvapara Yuga, when divine intellect has ceased to exist, but people are still valiant, courageous, competitive and engaged in penance and charity. With a cosmology like this, one expects past ages to come again with human morality changing in a predictable pattern for the worse, but also for the better again.

It seems like every cultural group around the world has cyclical aspects with routine practices and yearly seasonal festivals and traditions, whether the culture is indigenous, nomadic, or an empire. It makes sense to honor and celebrate as the environment changes through the year, out of control but in mostly predictable ways. Humanity is dependent on the earth and gratitude for what each season brings can bring us together in a context far larger than ourselves. Each time a celebrated holiday passes, memories are formed that stitch the season to prior years in our memories.

Cyclical time emphasizes recurrence over the idea of progress or irreversible advancement over time. Things ebb and flow. Tribes like the Hopi of Arizona perceive time as a repeating cycle, where events echo through generations in harmony with seasonal changes and natural phenomena. This fosters a worldview where ancestors, the living, and future beings are all part of an ongoing loop, influencing practices like storytelling and rituals that "re-enact" historical or mythical events. From the Pacific Northwest, the Syilx or Okanagan indigenous group conceptualizes time as

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"spiralic," a form of cyclical progression that coils forward while revisiting patterns. It underscores cultural continuity, where physical-earth time spirals through cycles of growth, decay, and rebirth, informing land stewardship and oral histories.

The Mayan calendar system exemplifies cyclical time through interlocking wheels of days, months, and eras (like the Long Count), where history repeats in vast cycles. This view influenced agriculture, prophecies, and social organization, seeing time as a series of endings and renewals rather than a straight path.

There's evidence that the ancient Celtic pagans also embraced a similar cyclic nature-based view of time with celebration of festivals such as Samhain, Lughnasadh, and Beltane. Neo-pagans often include spiral iconography, especially with winter solstice celebrations.

Like Tania Marquez said in the reading earlier, rituals... are embedded with a deeper meaning, and they touch our lives in significant ways. The communal experience of sharing and belonging is an expression of our deep humanity. Every time we opened up ourselves to one another, we were becoming more human without knowing it.

Linear time

The Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, usually portray time in linear ways starting with the creation of the universe. Christianity and Islam both teach about a Judgement Day. There are certainly still cyclical elements in these religions such as daily prayers and weekly sabbaths. These faiths adopted an overarching linear view of time from earlier influences like Zoroastrianism, which introduced concepts of cosmic struggle ending in triumph, contrasting with the cyclic polytheistic views of ancient Mesopotamia or Greece. Linear time in the Abrahamic religions provides a theological foundation for hope, ethics, and divine sovereignty—history isn't random repetition but a purposeful story.

The linear concept of time, as a way of perceiving, is heavy with the characteristic of measurable spans of chronos time, yet along the way there are many openings to perceive kairos moments, or opportune moments.

Eschatological hope is defined as the religious expectation of a future, final fulfillment of God's promises for humanity and the world, encompassing themes like justice, redemption, and God's Kingdom. It is rooted in eschatology, the study of last things or end times, and provides a framework for understanding present suffering by focusing on a definitive future resolution of evil and suffering, bringing reconciliation and new creation.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s essay, *The Christian Pertinence of Eschatological Hope*, provides some interpretations of eschatological hope in the context of modern scientific understanding and some unique ways of interpreting it. He quotes St. Paul in Galatians 2:20, "Nevertheless I live: yet not I,

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but Christ liveth in me.” He also quotes George Hedley, “The second coming of the Christ is not an event in space-time, but an experience which transcends all physical categories. It belongs not to the sky, but to the human heart; not to the future, but to whatever present we are willing to assign to it.” Dr. King asserts, “Actually we are celebrating the Second Advent every time we open our hearts to Jesus, every time we turn our backs to the low road and accept the high road, every time we say no to self that we may say yes to Jesus Christ, every time a man or women turns from ugliness to beauty and is able to forgive even their enemies.”

In regards to Judgement Day, he says, “...We must agree with the spiritual value of this view held by the early Christians, for the personality of Jesus does serve as a judgment upon us all.⁴ When we set aside the spectacular paraphernalia of the judgment scene and the literal throne we come to the real meaning of the doctrine.⁵ The highest court of justice is in the heart of man after the light of Christ has illumined his motive and all his inner life. Any day when {we} waken to the fact that we are making a great moral decision, any day of experienced nearness to Christ, any day when in the light of Christ, we see ourselves, is a day of judgment.

Dr King says, ““The phrase [kingdom of God] meant literally the reign of God, the condition of things in which God’s will is everywhere supreme.” Here we are left in no doubt as to the true meaning of the concept. Whether it come soon or late, by sudden crisis or through slow development, the kingdom of God will be a society in which all men and women will be controlled by the eternal love of God. When we see social relationships controlled everywhere by the principles which Jesus illustrated in his life—trust, love, mercy, and altruism—then we shall know that the kingdom of God is here.”

In Mathew 13:31-32 Jesus tells the parable of the mustard seed.

31 ...“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”

And perhaps Dr. King’s interpretations of the Kingdom of Heaven are correct because in Luke 17:20-21 it says, “Now when [Christ] was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.”

St. Augustine speaks of linear chronos time experienced by humans in contrast with how he understood God’s experience of time. “A person singing or listening to a song he knows well suffers a distension or stretching in feeling and in sense perception from the expectation of future sounds and the memory of past sound. With you it is otherwise. You are unchangeably eternal, that is the truly eternal creator of minds.”

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St. Augustine also speaks of the challenge of what meditation practitioners call the monkey mind, rumination, or worry. “The storms of incoherent events tear to pieces my thoughts, the inmost, entrails of my soul, until that day when, purified and molten by the fire of your love, I flow together to merge into you.”

Is God’s presence in all of eternity at once, like St. Augustine believed?

Does living in a linear state of mind, consumed with thoughts of past and future help or harm us?

Is the experience of merging with the eternal the same as living in the present moment?

The Eternal Now

Eckhart Tolle’s book, *The Power of Now*, focuses on the value of the present moment and centering our awareness there. His teachings draw from traditions such as Zen Buddhism, Christian mysticism, Sufism, and Hinduism, although he remains unaffiliated with any religion.

Eckhart Tolle says, “Accept — then act. Whatever the present moment contains, accept it as if you had chosen it. Always work with it, not against it. Make it your friend and ally, not your enemy. This will miraculously transform your whole life.” This relates to E.C. White’s definition of *kairos* as the moment “when the weaver must draw the yarn through a gap that momentarily opens in the warp of the cloth being woven”. How could a weaver be ready for the gap created in the warp if they aren’t aware in the present moment?

The Power of Now teaches that living in the present moment liberates us from the ego’s grip, dissolves suffering, and connects us to our true, timeless essence. By embracing the Now, we find peace and spiritual awakening, transforming how we experience life and relationships.

The key practices taught in the book are:

- Mindfulness and Observation: Watch your thoughts without judgment to separate from the ego. Focus on bodily sensations or breath to stay grounded in the Now.
- Releasing the Pain-Body: Recognize negative emotions as they arise, observe them without reaction, and allow them to dissolve through awareness.
- Surrendering to the Present: Accept the current moment fully, even if it’s uncomfortable, to break the cycle of resistance and suffering.
- Meditation and Stillness: Regular moments of stillness (e.g., noticing silence or nature) deepen presence and connection to Being.

Zazen, meaning “seated meditation” in Japanese, is the core practice of Zen Buddhism, emphasizing direct experience of one’s true nature through sitting in stillness and awareness. Unlike goal-oriented meditation, zazen is “just sitting”, prioritizing presence over achieving a

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specific state. At the dojo where I practice the martial art, Aikido, we practice a form of zazen meditation, seeking to cultivate a gentle awareness of all of our senses without focusing in on any single thing in the environment. For me, this usually means first feeling my breath, gently gazing forward, allowing myself to notice some things but not staying fixed on any one thing. I notice what I see, hear, smell, and feel in the present moment. It is the perfect set up for attending class when I am best served by being a good listener and observer.

Wu Wei is a central concept in Taoism, and translates to "non-action" or "effortless action" in Chinese. It refers to a state of being where actions align naturally with the flow of the Tao, the underlying principle of the universe that governs all existence. Rather than implying passivity or inaction, wu wei describes acting in harmony with natural rhythms, without force, struggle, or overthinking, allowing events to unfold spontaneously and effectively. Rooted in texts like the Tao Te Ching by Lao Tzu and the writings of Zhuangzi, wu wei emphasizes simplicity, spontaneity, and alignment with the cyclical, ever-changing nature of reality.

In Aikido practice we are often told to train with effortlessness, but what does this mean? I think it comes out in several ways. First, we are taught not to push or wrestle against attacks but rather to take the momentum or energy provided in an aggressor's attack and blend with it in order to move into the most convenient and useful response. Second, our zazen practice finds another application with a training method called randori, which is all-out training which can involve multiple attackers and multiple styles of attack in one session. The trick I have found in order to get much of anything out of randori, is to stay as present as possible and avoid anticipating or predicting what the attackers are going to do. By doing this, my intuition becomes accessible, and my reactions go by feel more than they go by rote memorization. My intuition then, has been trained by many hours of practice. It is important to note that danger that could arise if I practice behavior that could harm me, because in the opportune moment that my intuition is needed, I don't want it to steer me wrong. However, perhaps there is something more divine available in the practice of being present. Why else would it be an optimal state to be in during battle and the most risky moments of our lives?

Meister Eckhart says, "God is nearer to me than I am to myself; my being depends on God's being near me and present to me."

Addressing God, St. Augustine says, "Your years are but a day, and your day is not recurrent, but always today. Your today yields not to tomorrow and does not follow yesterday. Your today is eternity." He also says, "What is time then? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks me, I do not know." It is certainly confusing to focus on time.

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Conclusion

We've explored a wide landscape today — from the Greek words *chronos* and *kairos*, to the brain hemispheres, to Hindu Yugas and indigenous spirals of time, to the linear visions of the Abrahamic faiths, to the mystics and modern teachers who urge us to live in the present.

And yet... time still resists us. Augustine was right: "If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I try to explain it, I do not know."

But the effort to wrestle with time is not wasted. It shapes how we live, how we imagine God, and how we relate to one another.

Physics tells us that time dilates at near-light speeds. Theology tells us that God may be outside of time entirely. Mysticism tells us that eternity may be found in this very moment. And our own experience tells us that time can feel fast or slow, heavy or light, depending on where our attention rests.

St. Augustine said God's 'today is eternity' — an always-present now. Meister Eckhart put it this way: God is nearer to me than I am to myself.

Dr. King, reflecting on eschatological hope, reminded us that the Kingdom of God is not only in some distant future but is also within us. Every time we choose the high road over the low, every time we say no to self and yes to love, every time forgiveness triumphs over hatred — that is *kairos*. That is eternity breaking into *chronos*.

So I leave you not with answers, but with some of my questions.

Considering the different modes associated with the right and left brain hemispheres of the brain, how would they each play a role in a Sabbath day of rest, reflection, and presence with God?

Are the ages of the Hindu Yuga cycle really so different from the linear stories of Abrahamic faith? Does every ending come with a new beginning?

Ancient Egyptian theology viewed time as dual: *neheh* (cyclical) and *djet* (linear eternity). Do you think time has both of these qualities?

And finally: What does an opportune moment look like for you? Can you recognize your *kairos* when it comes?

McGilchrist warns that our culture is ruled by the left hemisphere — by abstraction, bureaucracy, and control — while the right hemisphere, with its empathy, meaning, and presence, is pushed aside. Do you think he is right? And if he is, what can we do about it?

Friends, it is certainly perplexing to think too long about the nature of time. But perhaps that is part of the joy of it: time is both mystery and invitation.

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May we learn not just to measure our days but to look for the moments when time opens — when the eternal brushes against the everyday. Those are the moments that transform us. Those are the moments of kairos.

Sending Forth

Jayne: *Closing Song: #298, *Wake, Now, My Senses*

Cindy: Closing Words: Excerpt from *To Bless the Space Between Us*, by John O'Donohue

“May you experience each day as a sacred gift,
woven around the heart of wonder.
May your soul be attentive to the quiet miracles
that seek no attention.
May you find time to celebrate
the quiet miracles that do not seek attention.
May you be brought to that place
where time touches eternity.”

Cindy: Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame, but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These, we carry within our hearts until we are together again.

Thank you to Jayne for the music, to [Names] for helping with the service, and to [Names] for helping with A/V and the Zoom room.

Cindy: Announcements

Before our Postlude begins, we have a few announcements for the good of the community

- Upcoming events, groups, and services can be found in your OOS, on our website, and in the weekly newsletter. You may notice we have a few private events booked on our calendar. I'd like to remind everyone that our building can be reserved, so if you have a special event coming up and need a space, please talk to me because I am the current building use person. Instead of charging a fixed rental fee, we kindly request good-will donations to help support our mission and maintain our facilities.
- Justice & Equity Group: Sunday, September 28 at 12:00 PM
- Book Club Discussion: Saturday, October 4 at 10:30 AM

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- Saturday Sing-Along – Song Share: Saturday, October 11 at 6:00 PM
- Does anybody else, in the sanctuary or Zoom, have other announcements, for the good of the community?

Cindy: Sharing the fruits of our labor and good fortune

During our Postlude, we invite you to share the fruits of our labor and good fortune. We give to remind ourselves how many gifts we have to offer. We give to remember that we are part of something bigger than ourselves. We give because we believe in music and sacred space. You are now invited to participate in the blessing of giving to this free religious community, as we Share the Fruits of our labor and good fortune. After the postlude, you are invited for tea and coffee and snacks.

Jayne: Postlude

After postlude and baskets are collected: “We give thanks for these gifts and dedicate them to continue the good works of this Unitarian Universalist Community of Casper.”

Tech Team: Clean up